

Testimony of

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House Bill 5371: An Act Concerning Accessible Housing
Joint Committee on Housing
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Thank you for this opportunity to comment today on this issue of import to individuals across the state, as well as to the state budget.

As you know, the Connecticut Commission on Aging (CoA) is an independent, nonpartisan state agency that is part of the legislative branch of government. We are devoted to preparing our state for a burgeoning aging population while promoting policies that enhance the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For sixteen years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

Three years ago, the Commission on Aging was pleased to work with the UConn Health Center, Center on Aging on the state's Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, a study which has been cited as one of the nation's most comprehensive. That study found that almost 80% of Connecticut residents would prefer to remain in their homes as they age. Over 70% of respondents recognized that they may need home modifications, such as wheelchair ramps, in order to remain in those homes.

Follow-up data from the Needs Assessment also support the fact that individuals can receive services in their homes for about half the cost to the state of being in a nursing home. Keeping people in their homes as they age is a clear "win-win" for the state: it is the rare instance when saving money actually provides individuals with a higher quality of life.

However, the Needs Assessment also found that the lack of available, accessible, affordable housing is an obstacle to people remaining in their communities as they age. More recently, it has become apparent that the movement to transfer people out of nursing homes and back into the community (through the Money Follows the Person program) is also hampered by this lack of appropriate housing. In fact, over 300 nursing home residents have completed every step of the process to be transitioned back to the community; by far, the largest reason for the delay in transition is a lack of appropriate housing.

The Commission on Aging asks this Committee to consider the bill before you as one step in the critical process of providing more accessible, appropriate housing for individuals in our state. While this proposal does not address existing housing stock, it could change the way our state thinks about new housing proposals moving forward. We support the Committee's dedication to finding a balanced approach to this issue and look forward to working with you. Thank you.

